

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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EPISCOPAL CHURCH MEMBERSHIP UP IN 1979

NEW YORK - "For the first time in a number of years the Episcopal Church has shown signs of a revival, at least in its membership statistics," according to the Rev. John A. Schultz, Statistical Officer at the Episcopal Church Center.

The annual parochial reports from the 95 U.S. dioceses of the Church show that the total baptized membership rose to 2,841,350 in 1979, an increase of half a percentage point. Father Schultz said that baptisms for the year increased to 60,276 (up 3 percent) and confirmations and receptions to 58,977 (up 2.2 percent).

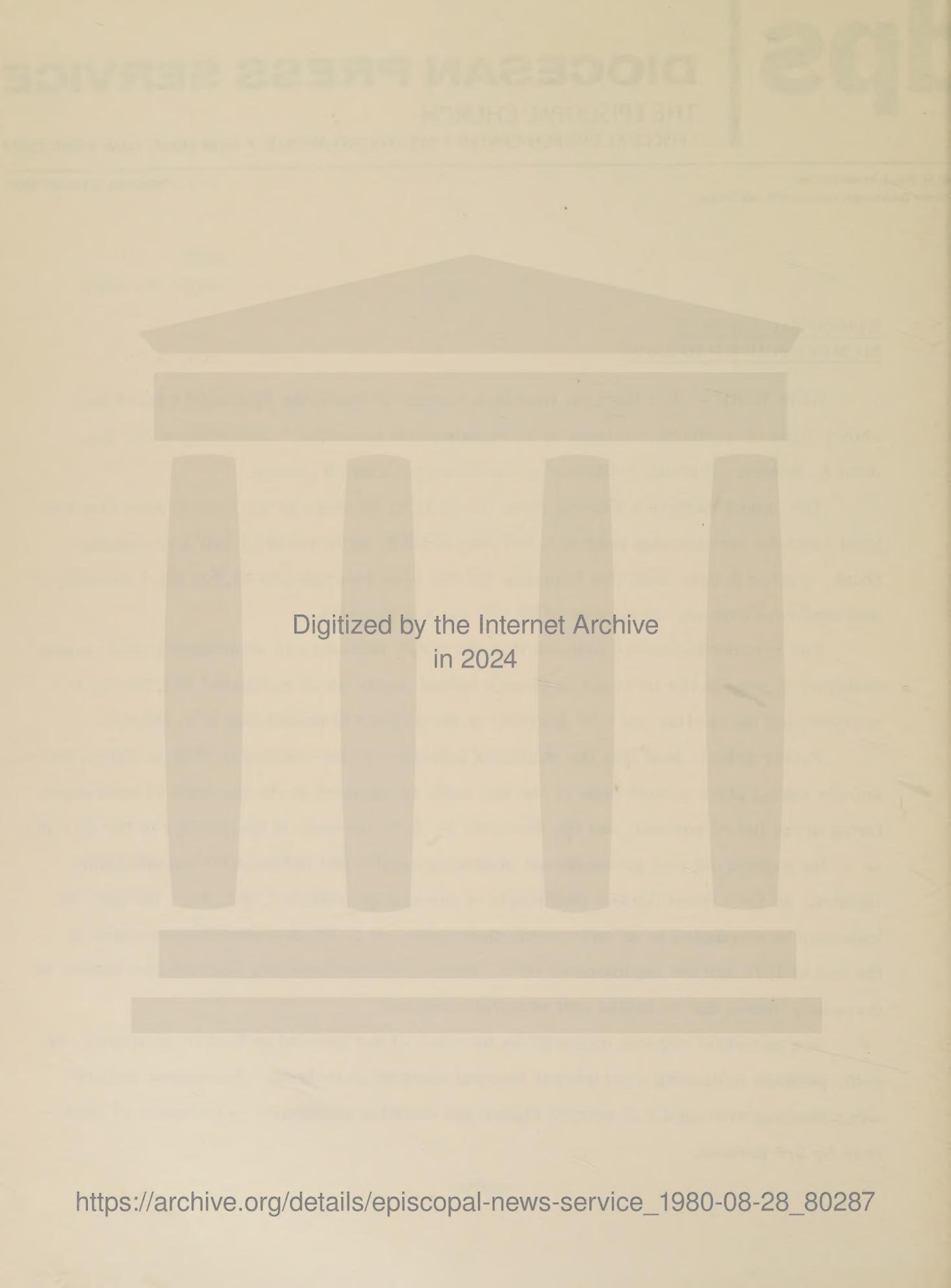
The reports seemed to indicate that the major increases in membership were among children as seen in the increase in Church school pupils which numbered 493,759 (up 0.8 percent) and the decline (by 0.37 percent) in the number of households to 1,139,625.

Father Schultz said that the statistics indicate that the continuing shift in United States society taking place at both ends of the age scale is apparent in the increase of individuals living alone (up 37 percent) and the decrease (by 0.74 percent) in the number of family units.

He pointed out that communicant statistics usually fall behind other membership figures. In 1979 these figures declined by a percentage point to 1,962,060. He said the loss may be attributed to an undercount discrepancy of 7,737 between those reported at the end of 1978 and the beginning of 1979. While confirmations and restorations showed an increase, losses due to deaths and removals declined.

The parochial reports indicated an increase of 9.4 percent in Easter attendance, he said, perhaps indicating a peripheral renewal interest in religion. Attendance on three other Sundays averaged 7.3 percent higher and weekday attendance -- exclusive of Lent -- rose by 5.8 percent.

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In the area of stewardship, collection plate and pledge receipts showed a gain of 8.4 percent -- from \$4.86 to \$5.27 per household per week. Overall general receipts increased by 9.4 percent to \$400,489,766 and gross income in parishes reached an all-time high of \$654 million, up from \$502 million.

The reports show that the effect of inflation on parish operating expenses may be seen in the increase of 9.3 percent. Parish operating expenses now average 84 percent of general receipts compared with 71 percent a year ago.

Father Schultz said that parish contributions to purposes outside themselves rose 9.6 percent to reach \$74,081,469, including response to the Episcopal Church's Venture in Mission renewal/fund raising program. However, he pointed out, this rise only kept the Episcopal Church at its usual level of giving to benevolences: 15 percent of total revenue compared with 20 percent for most major mainline churches.

He said that while the total for outside purposes rose 9.6 percent, the giving to the dioceses and the national General Church Program rose only 8.5 percent, which is below inflation needs. Parishes are now giving 10.9 percent of their total revenue to the dioceses compared with 11.3 percent in 1978 and 11.5 percent in 1977.

While figures from the 18 overseas dioceses of the Church are incomplete, indications are that there are similar percentage trends in those areas to those in domestic dioceses. The 1978 reports indicated about 200,000 members in the overseas dioceses.

Domestic clergy, exclusive of bishops, increased from 12,197 to 12,600. Of this number, 5,243 were non-parochial compared with 5,056 in 1978.

In 1979, ordinations to the priesthood included 274 men and 53 women, the statistician reported. This brings the total number of women clergy to 330 -- as of last December 31 -- of whom 173 are in the parish ministry. A breakdown of the 330 women clergy shows that at the end of 1979, there were 144 deacons and 186 priests.

Receptions of clergy from Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism totalled 21 for the year. Depositions and suspensions dropped to 45, well below the level of the years preceding when there were resignations due to schism.

One of the largest segments of non-parochial clergy consists of retired priests and deacons, now totalling 1,892. At the end of 1979 there were 391 candidates for Holy Orders and 467 postulants, of whom 20 percent were women.

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